17

# R. BAXTER'S

## Sence of the

## Subscribed ARTICLES

## OF

# RELIGION.

I Take not this Form of Words called, *The Articles of the Church of England*, to be essential to the said Church; nor any thing in them to be essential to the Christian Religion, which was not so from its beginning, and in the first Ages of Christianity, yea and in every following Age: nor do I take such Form or Matter to be instead of the Scripture and the ancient Creeds, a necessary Rule of Divine Faith, or necessary to the Being of Ministry, Membership, and Communion in the Church of *England*: But that they were, subordinate to the Scriptures and the said Creeds, a laudable Profession of this Church at the Reformation, that they mis-

 expounded

expounded not the Divine Rule by any Hereſie, thereby to promote our Communion with other Reformed Churches, and to guide Novices at home in the Expoſition of the ſaid Rule: Far be it from us to be of a Religion and Church which is no older than the ſaid Articles or Common Prayer. But holding, with excellent *Auguſtine*, that *Contra Rationem nemo ſobrius, & contra Scripturam nemo Chriſtianus*, ſo alſo that, *Contra Eccleſiam nemo pacificus*; (the Church ſtill being ſuppoſed to be for Reaſon and Scripture, ſober and Chriſtian) and wiſhing that God's own Word were taken for the ſufficient Terms of our Conſent and Concord in order to Union and Communion, and knowing that the Ambiguity of words, and our common imperfection in the Art of Speaking, do leave an uncertainty in the ſence of moſt humane Writings till explained, and yet ſuppoſing that the Authors of theſe Articles meant them Orthodoxly, that I may not ſeem needleſly ſcrupulous, I ſubſcribe them, and that I may not be unconſcionably raſh in ſubſcribing, I here tell all whom it may concern, how I underſtand the words which I ſubſcribe.

Art. 2. **A Sacrifice for all the ſin of man, Original and Actual.**] Tho' [*Omnibus*] be alſo in the Latine, [*All*] is left out in K. *James* his Edition. I ſuppoſe they meant not [*for any mans final predominant Impenitence, Infidelity, Atheiſm* or *Unholineſs*;] but for all ſorts of ſin, on condition of Faith and Repentance, actually pardoning them to penitent Believers.

Art.

Art. 3. **He went down into Hell** ] That is, into *Hades*, the ſtate of ſeparated Souls: Of which ſee Archbiſhop *Uſher*'s Anſwer to the Jeſuits.

Art. 4 **Took again his Body with fleſh and bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of mans Nature, wherewith he aſcended into Heaven, and there ſitteth,** &c.]

That is, He ſitteth in Heaven with the ſame Body Glorified, which was fleſh and bones on Earth, and catechreſtically is by ſome ſo called, now it is a celeſtial, incorruptible, ſpiritual, glorious Body; but indeed is not now the ſame thing which we call formally *Fleſh*, *Bones*, or *Blood*, nor will admit of the ſame Definition. For, 1. The Scripture ſaith plainly, That *Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 15. 50. There is a *natural Body*, and *there is a ſpiritual Body*, verſ. 43, 44. The Context ſheweth that it is not moral ſinful corruption that is called *Fleſh* and *Blood* here, but that natural corruptibility which *Fleſh* and *Blood* hath. See *Hammond* on the Text.

Chriſt's Body will not be worſe than ours (but ours made like to his, *Phil.* 3. 20.) But ours ſhall not be fleſh, blood, and bones.

2. When there is not the ſame Form or Definition, there is not to be the ſame proper formal Denomination: But no ſober Philoſopher or Phyſician ever gave ſuch a Definition of *Fleſh*, *Blood*, or *Bones* as will truly agree with Chriſt's glorified Body:

The name therefore can be but equivocal.

3. There is a Symmetry in God's Works, Chriſt being in his Glorified Humanity advanced above Angels in Power, is not below them in natural Perfection: His ſpiritual celeſtial Body is congruous to his Soul; and all the Angels obey and worſhip him. When we are the Children of the Reſurrection, we ſhall be equal to the Angels, and neither marry nor die: and ſo not have bodies of mortal conſtitution. I dare not ſay that the Sun or Light is a more Glorious body than Chriſt's; nor encourage thoſe Diſputers that ask how many foot long and broad his body is, or the place that containeth it.

4. I dare not incur the guilt of contradicting two General Councils in a matter of Faith, when they anathematize the Diſſenters, and agree therein, tho' diſagreeing in other things, and pleading the Tradition of the Fathers, and the Scripture.

The ſeventh General Council at *C. P.* under *Conſt. Copion.* condemning Image-Worſhip, ſaith, (as *Binnius* tranſlateth it) *pag.* 378. *Defin.* 7. [*Siquis non confeſſus fuerit Dominum noſtrum Jeſum Chriſtum poſt aſſumptionem animatæ rationalis & intellectualis carnis, ſimul ſedere cum Deo & Patre, atq; ita quoq; rurſus venturum cum Paterna Majeſtate, judicaturum vivos & mortuos, non amplius quidem* Carnem, *neq;* Incorporeum *tamen, ut videatur ab iis à quibus compunctus eſt, & maneat Deus extra craſſitudinem carnis, Anathema.*

To which ſaith the ſecond *Nicene* (their Adverſaries) by *Epiphanius*, *Huc uſq; rectè ſentiunt & Patrum traditionibus conſentientiæ dicunt.*] 5. The

5. The long Church-Diviſions, which have for 1300 years followed the raſh Determinations about ſome dark inviſible things, maketh me more inclined to ſuſpend, than raſhly to affirm, in doubtful caſes, eſpecially about God, and Jeſus Chriſt.

6. It is not the perfection of Glorified Humanity to be fleſh and bones.

7. I cannot ſay, that *Earth* (as fleſh and bones are) dwells in Æthereal Regions.

Art. 6. **Holy Scripture containeth all things neceſſary to Salvation**] I conſent: Therefore if the Miniſtry, Sacraments, and Church-Communion be neceſſary to Salvation, the Scripture containeth all neceſſary to them

Ibid. **In the name of the holy Scriptures we underſtand thoſe Canonical Books of the Old and New Teſtament, of whoſe Authority was never any doubt in the Church.**] Expoſ. Not excluding the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; *James*; 2 *Pet. Jude*; 2 & 3 *John*; *Revelation*, which divers Churches long doubted of.

Art. 7. [**The Civil Precepts thereof** (the Law given from God by *Moſes*) **ought not of neceſſity to be received in any Commonwealth.**]

Expoſ. *Civilia ſunt præcepta quæ dantur ad regendas civitates* (*ſeu ſocietates civiles*) God's Laws are the Supreme Civil Laws: Man's Laws are but by-Laws (ſuch as Corporations make under the Laws

Laws of the Land) about things mutable, left undetermined by God, and ſubordinate to his Laws. God hath two ſorts of Civil Laws: Firſt, ſuch as are univerſal or common to all Chriſtian Nations at leaſt: As, That there ſhall be Rulers and Subjects; That Rulers obey and promote the Laws of God and the Kingdom of Chriſt, and do nothing againſt them; That they ſeek the common Good, and rule in Righteouſneſs, and be a Terrour to evil Works, and encourage Piety and Vertue and Peace; That they reſtrain Blaſphemy, Perjury, Prophaneneſs, Murder, Adultery, Theft, falſe Witneſs, and falſe Judging, *&c.* Theſe Civil Laws bind all Nations, as the Law of Nature; and all Chriſtian Nations, as the Law of Chriſt: But not as the Laws of *Moſes* promulgate to the *Jews*. 2. But there are alſo particular Civil Laws that were proper to the *Jews* Commonwealth *in ſpecie*: I ſuppoſe the Article meaneth theſe, and includeth the former in the word [*Moral Laws*] though indeed they be the moſt eminent Civil Laws.

Art. 8. **The three Creeds, viz. Nice Creed, Athanaſius Creed, and that commonly called the Apoſtles Creed, ought throughly to be received and believed** (*omnino.*]

Exp. 1. Rightly underſtood; *viz.* 1. That by [**God of God very God of very God**] be not meant *two Gods*: 2. Nor the damnatory Clauſes taken for part of *Athanaſius* Creed, (though they be part of the Liturgy aſſented and conſented to.)

Art.

Art. 9. **This infection of Nature doth remain even in them that are regenerate.**

Expoſ. That is, in a mortified, ſubdued degree, but not predominant, or unpardoned.

Art. 10. **We have no power** (*nihil valemus*] *viz.* Our natural Powers or Faculties are not ſufficient without Grace.

Art. 11. **We are accounted righteous before God only for the Merit of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, and not for our own works or deſervings: wherefore that we are juſtified by Faith only, is a moſt wholeſom Doctrine,** &c.]

Expoſ. Tho' he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, and the Scripture throughout and frequently mentioneth an inherent perſonal Righteouſneſs neceſſary to Salvation, yet this is no Univerſal Righteouſneſs, nor ſuch as will juſtifie us according to the Law of Innocency or Works; but is meerly ſubordinate to the Merit and Efficacy of the Sacrifice and Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which only meriteth for us as a Price, our Faith being only the requiſite (yet given) moral qualification for the reception of the free gift of Pardon, Juſtification and Adoption, and hath not the leaſt part of the Office or Honour of Chriſt; yet are Chriſt's words true, That by mens *words they ſhall be juſtified or condemned:* And all men ſhall be judged according to their works: And *James* truly ſaith, that *by works a man is juſtified,* and not by faith only: Not by works of perfection

ſection or of *Moſes* Law, nor any that as a price or commutation do make the reward to be of Debt, and not of Grace; but by a practical Faith or Chriſtianity: ſuch Acts as Faith it ſelf is, and prove our Belief to be ſuch as Chriſt hath promiſed Juſtification and Salvation to; ſuch as by juſtifying Belief to be ſincere, do juſtifie the perſon againſt the Charge of Infidelity, Hypocriſie, Impenitence and Ungodlineſs, Chriſtianity is that Faith which *Paul* oppoſeth to Works.

Art. 12. **Good works ſpring out neceſſarily of a true and lively Faith, inſomuch that by them a lively Faith may as evidently be known as a tree diſcerned by the fruit.**

Expoſ. 1. It is a *Hypothetical neceſſity*, that is here meant, conſiſtent with freedom. 2. And a *Truth* of *Evidence*, and not an *equal degree*.

Art. 13. **Works done before the Grace of Chriſt and the Inſpiration of the Spirit, are not pleaſant to God; forasmuch as they ſpring not of Faith in Jeſus Chriſt: neither do they make men meet to receive Grace, or as the Schools ſay, deſerve Grace of Congruity, yea rather they have the nature of ſin.]**

Expoſ. 1. No good is done before all common Grace. 2. Preparatory Grace uſually goeth before ſpecial Grace; and thoſe that reſiſt it, are farther from the Kingdom of God, than they that have it. And *to him that hath* (by improvement) *ſhall be given:*

*given:* And *in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him.* Believing that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, is better than nothing, and than meer ſin.

Art. 14. **Voluntary Works, beſides, over and above God's Commandments, which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and iniquity.**

Expoſ. I ſuppoſe they meant not that voluntary Canons, Impoſitions, Oaths, and Church-Offices are ſo bad.

*Art.* 16. Expoſ. I ſuppoſe this Article meaneth only the *unpardoned Sin* againſt the H. Ghoſt, and of a total departure from common Grace, and ſome degree of Habit and Act from ſpecial Grace; but determineth not the Controverſie, whether any totally and finally fall from ſuch an unconfirmed Grace as elſe would ſave.

Art. 18. **They are to be had Accurſed that preſume to ſay, that every man ſhall be ſaved by the Law or Sect which he profeſſeth, ſo that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law and the Light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth ſet out to us only the Name of Jeſus Chriſt whereby men muſt be ſaved.]**

Expoſ. Some Sects contradict the Light of Nature: They worſhip Devils, and offer their Chil-

dren in Sacrifice to them, and murder the juſt: This will ſave none. But if the meaning be to curſe all that hope that ſome are ſaved, who never heard of the Name of Chriſt, and that his Spirit and Grace go farther than the knowledge of his Name, I will not curſe ſuch. All were not accurſed that hoped well of *Socrates*, *Antonine*, *Alexander Severus*, *Cicero*, *Epictetus*, *Plutarch*, &c. There is no Name that is, no other Meſſiah to be ſaved by but Chriſt. But, 1. God judgeth men by no other Law, but that which they were under: And the Law of Grace made to fallen Mankind in *Adam* and *Noah*, was not repealed by the *Jews* peculiarity. 2. God had more People than the *Jews* and *Proſelytes* of old. 3. The old *Jews* knew leſs of Chriſt than his Apoſtles before his Reſurrection. 4. The Apoſtles then believed not his dying for our ſins, his Reſurrection, Aſcenſion, heavenly Interceſſion, &c. 5. It's no Chriſtianity now that believeth not theſe. If I durſt curſe all the World who now believe no more than the old *Jews* and the Apoſtles then did, yet durſt I not curſe all Chriſtians that hope better of them.

Art. 23 **Thoſe we ought to judge lawfully called and ſent, which be choſen and called to this work by men, who have publick Authority given them in the Congregation, to call and ſend Miniſters into the Lord's Vineyard.]**

Expoſ. **Given them**, that is, by Chriſt in his Scripture-Inſtitution, and by thoſe that Chriſt authoriſeth under him.

Art.

Art. 25. **Sacraments be certain ſure Witneſſes and effectual Signs of Grace, and God's good Will**, &c.]

Expoſ. They *ſignifie* what God *offereth*: They *inveſt* the *true believing Receiver* in the Right of Pardon, Adoption, and Salvation. They are *morally operative Signs* of exciting and increaſing inherent Grace in Believers.

Art. 26. [**Nor is the Effect of Chriſt's Ordinances taken away by their (Miniſters) wickedneſs**]

Expoſ. Sacraments are not void, becauſe a bad man adminiſtred them; but Prayer, and Preaching and Example are uſually more effectual from able godly men, than from the ignorant and wicked. The blind man could ſay, *God heareth not ſinners; but if any be a Worſhipper of God, and do his Will, him he heareth.* Pſal 50. To the wicked ſaith God, *What haſt thou to do to take my Covenant into thy mouth*, &c. It is a ſin to prefer a bad man before a better. And it is dangerous to encourage men in daily ſin, who uſurp the Sacred Office of Biſhops or Paſtors, having neither the Qualifications eſſentially neceſſary thereto, nor that which is eſſentially neceſſary to a Call.

The excepted Articles, and thoſe that need no Expoſition, I paſs by. If I have hit on the true meaning, I ſubſcribe my Aſſent: and I thank God that this National Church hath Doctrine ſo ſound, and pity them that *write*, *preach*, or *practiſe* contrary

trary to the Articles which they ſubſcribe, and accuſe them that refuſe ſubſcribing them; and take them for Sinners, who take them not for their Paſtors, becauſe that their Wickedneſs nulleth not their Sacramental Adminiſtrations.

FINIS.

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